

Lessons Learned from USAID Assistance Following Earthquakes

- Restoration of security is essential to prevent looting which hinders the arrival and distribution of humanitarian assistance.ⁱ
- Donor coordination avoids wasteful duplication of relief and reconstruction efforts.ⁱⁱ
- Involving community stakeholders in development planning helps ensure that they will support the plan and be more willing to contribute their time and resources to help carry it out. Community empowerment will result in communities that are rebuilt in a way that contributes to sustainable development more so than those in which all planning is done by officials and outside experts.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Housing reconstruction programs must ensure that beneficiaries have clear title to their properties before implementation can begin.^{iv}
- Seismic awareness, preparedness, and mitigation activities can be successfully integrated into housing and shelter reconstruction programs through appropriate training of both skilled and unskilled construction labor.^v
- Housing reconstruction should avoid relocating dwellings as there is the risk of building on valuable and scarce agricultural land.^{vi}
- Where it is not possible for populations to return to multi-unit dwellings, such as apartment complexes, housing certificates - based on the average cost of housing units - can facilitate moving displaced persons into permanent housing within a relatively short period of time.^{vii}
- Employment generation and rubble removal activities provide income for populations whose livelihoods have been disrupted, while eliminating the health and safety hazards of accumulated debris, garbage, and waste.^{viii}
- Credit and technical assistance can help microfinance institutions weather increases in arrears that typically result from natural disasters while enabling them to provide loans to help families deal with the economic shock created by the disaster.^{ix}

ⁱ USAID, Iran Earthquake – Fact Sheets Nos. 1 – 4, December 28-31, 2003.

ⁱⁱ GAO, USAID's Earthquake Recovery Program in El Salvador Has Made Progress but Key Activities are Behind Schedule, May 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ Indo-US Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion Project – Debt Market Component (FIRE-D), Project Notes: Initiative for Planned and Participatory Reconstruction, May 2002.

^{iv} GAO, USAID's Earthquake Recovery Program in El Salvador Has Made Progress but Key Activities are Behind Schedule, May 2003.

^v Shelter for Life, Emergency Shelter Assistance in Earthquake-Affected Area of Baghlan Province, Afghanistan. Final Project Report, June 2003.

^{vi} USAID/Yemen, Self-Help Assistance for Reconstruction of Earthquake Damage, April 1987.

^{vii} Urban Institute, Armenia Earthquake Zone Pilot Housing Certificate Program, Quarterly Task Order Progress and Cost Report, October-December 2001.

^{viii} USAID/El Salvador, Project Assistance Completion Report – Earthquake Recovery Project No. 519-0331, July 1991.

^{ix} Development Alternatives, Inc., General Earthquake Assistance Provided by FOMIR/DAI – Final Report, June 2003.